

Friday Notes

Council for Agricultural Science and Technology

CAST

The Science Source for Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Issues

Friday Notes is designed to enhance communication among various agricultural sectors, educators, students, and the public who are interested in a variety of plant, animal, food, and environmental issues. *Friday Notes* advocates the pursuit of credible, unbiased, science-based information. Material contained in linked articles is from the original authors and does not necessarily reflect the views of the CAST organization.

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Hidden Treasures



Tucked into a slice of the Atlantic between Norway and Iceland, the majestic Faroe Islands contain some [mysterious northern treasures](#), including this "hanging lake."

Top 50 Food Questions

CAST is creating a [series of 50 informative, entertaining 90-second videos](#). This week's featured topic is *How Do I Keep Groceries Safe After Returning from the Market?* Each clip



addresses one question about "Food"--food safety, food ingredients,

farming and production methods, or environmental impacts.

Zika Website

University of Kentucky entomologists recently developed a

May 13, 2016

A Focus on Food Facts, Claims, and Dubious Headlines

A smorgasbord of food information and "scientific studies" calls to us from various media outlets, and a TV commentator recently suggested that viewers "find the study that sounds best to you and go with that." We assume he was being facetious, but at times it seems we can find some source to back up most any craving we have.



(image from [foodinsight.org](#))

CAST and other organizations try to provide science-based information, but it is still up to consumers to search, compare, and THINK about what they see, hear, and read. The following links give us some food for thought.

The **American Council on Science and Health often scrutinizes dubious claims. This article [looks at certain dietary supplements](#) that "are often nothing more than unregulated drugs."

****Comedian John Oliver** [satirizes scientific press releases](#) that further dumb-down and misrepresent the informational content of scientific studies. He blames the media and consumers alike for the prevalence of "fun, poppy science that we can share like gossip."

CAST authors and research specialists work hard to dispel inaccuracies and promote solid science. The recipients of the annual [Borlaug CAST Communication Award](#) are known for their abilities to focus on clear, factual information. For regular food/science information, check out the Twitter accounts of the last three BCCA winners: **Kevin Folta, <https://twitter.com/kevinfolta>; **C.S. Prakash**, <https://twitter.com/AgBioWorld>, and **Alison Van Eenennaam** <https://twitter.com/BioBeef>.

News and Views

website that will have [up-to-date information on the Zika virus](#) and its widening spread.

Swine Day

Iowa Swine Day will be on June 30 in Ames, as [leading experts focus on topics](#) vital to today's pork industry.

N.C. State Complex

If all goes as planned, a new 200,000-square-foot [plant sciences research complex](#) will be up and running on the North Carolina State University Centennial Campus by 2020.

Beef Research Reports

Beef producers will hear reports of Mississippi State University's research efforts related to a variety of [livestock health and management](#) considerations at a May 21 field day.

University Research Grant

Researchers at Iowa State University received a nearly \$1 million [grant to study antimicrobial resistance](#) in animal production systems.

Multilingual Roosters and Caring Farmers



As this blog demonstrates, a rooster on a Turkish farm might call out in a different language, but its [head butts](#) [need no translations](#).

CAST Social Media

[Click here for links](#) to CAST sites for Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, LinkedIn, videos, and the blog.

****Food Survey:** The IFIC Foundation's [2016 Food & Health Survey-- Food Decision 2016: The Impact of a Growing National Food Dialogue](#)-- is the 11th edition of a highly regarded ongoing investigation into beliefs and behaviors around health and diet, food components, food production, sustainability, and food safety.

****Food Label Confusion:** "Sell by" and "best by" date labels found on food packaging are [confusing to consumers and may contribute to food waste](#), according to a survey released by the Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic and the National Consumers League.

****Food Label Research (related to above):** Check out these two CAST Issue Papers: [Process Labeling of Food: Consumer Behavior, the Agricultural Sector, and Policy Recommendations](#), and [The Potential Impacts of Mandatory Labeling for Genetically Engineered Food in the United States](#).



****HSUS Agenda Questioned:** The Humane Society of the United States' newly formed National Agriculture Advisory Council stated its goals, but many farm groups are [concerned about the overall agenda](#).

****Farm Economics:** A joint study by university ag specialists at Kansas State and Georgia shows lenders from across the nation are expecting the financial [outlook for farmers to tighten](#).

News from the Far Side of the Barn

Knock, Knock; Who's There? Ali; Ali Who? (video): A neighborly [alligator rings the doorbell](#) of a South Carolina family home when he couldn't gain entry into the backyard pool.

It's Hard to Putt While Riding a Horse:

The Top 10 reasons cowboys shouldn't be allowed to play golf includes a problem with [spur damage to the greens](#).

Invasion of the Slugs (video): Britons could see a slug population explosion. The average British garden has 20,000 slugs, and [a few species are carnivorous](#). Some gardeners fight back with "slug pubs." Apparently, slugs like a brew, and this company sells [beer traps to catch the pests](#).



Cal Poly Joins CAST Education Program

The CAST organization benefits from the insights, research, and student involvement that comes from its member universities. California Polytechnic State University has added its expertise to this group.

California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) is a nationally ranked, comprehensive polytechnic university. The university's College of Agriculture, Food and



Environmental Sciences is comprised of expert faculty members who take pride in their ability to transform academically motivated students into innovative professionals ready to solve the complex challenges associated with feeding the world in sustainable ways. Students have access to state-of-the-art laboratories, including ranch land, orchards, vineyards and forests, all of which provide the basis for Cal Poly's Learn by Doing methodology. It is the fifth-largest college of agriculture in the country with 4,000 undergraduate students, and the largest non-land grant agricultural program.

The CAST community welcomes Cal Poly, and we join them in their efforts to motivate students, solve problems, and feed the world in sustainable ways.

Friday Notes News Categories

Photos courtesy of the Agricultural Research Service (top masthead); TopLatest News (globe at right). P. 1 Faroe Islands pic from suzzstravels.com, science image from foodinsight.org, and beer pic from growthis.com. Animal Sec. pig pic from adorablog.org. Food Sec. brain pic from healthyfellow.org. Plant Sec. soil pic from nationofchange.org. Inter. Sec. weather pic from godzilla.jpg. Gen. Sec. mosquito sign from postthisinc.com. Unless otherwise noted, photos courtesy of the USDA Agricultural Research Service.



Animal Agriculture and Environmental News

Beef Trade Improving (video): A Texas A&M expert reviews the [U.S. beef trade situation](#) and mentions other meat trade, including lamb transactions.

Precision Pig Care: A pig with a health problem may be easily overlooked, but [data can reveal what the eye cannot see](#). This study focused on how to turn no-shows at a feeder or drinker into warning signs.

Hens Sitting on the Porch? (opinion): State veterinarians across the nation are reviewing a proposed USDA rule that [eliminates the approval of outdoor porches for hens](#) from the National Organic Program.

Price Reports and Wild Sheep: The *Sheep Industry News* includes views about issues such as mandatory [price reporting and a wild sheep policy](#)--by the way, 80,000 wild sheep roam about the United States.

Poultry Groups Troubled by Allegations: The Poultry Industry is concerned about [allegations of worker mistreatment](#) at prominent processing plants.

A Moo Can Be Friendly, Inquisitive, or Even Sexy: Researchers measured the acoustics and frequency in cows' moos to understand the behavior [associated with each type of communication](#).

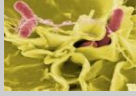
To Bee or Not to Bee: Beekeepers across the United States lost 44% of their [honeybee colonies](#) during the year spanning April 2015 to April 2016, according to preliminary results of an annual nationwide survey.

The Horns of a Dilemma: This report looks at the rearing of two young dairy cows whose genomes were [edited to make them hornless](#).

University Advice for Beef Producers: The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is showing small cow-calf producers how using the [latest reproductive research leads to larger profits](#).



Pigs [flying, drinking beer, and playing ball](#).



Food Science and Safety News

Chocolate Company Adds Protein Snacks (video): American consumer trends mean [protein-packed snacks are in high demand](#). Hershey's now offers meat snacks, with flavors like black cherry and basil citrus.

Defining Healthy: The Food and Drug Administration will [re-evaluate its definition](#) of "healthy," and this could eventually upend how a range of foods is marketed.

Top Ten Food Trends (opinion): The rise of single male households and an ageing population were the top two of ten key food and drink [trends that will dominate the food industry](#).

Fast-food Ranking (opinion): *Business Insider* and *Restaurant Business* compiled a ranking of the [25 best fast-food restaurants](#) in America.

Food for Thought? This list includes seven foods that [supposedly boost your mental performance](#).

Silk Coats for Fruit: A recent article in *Scientific Reports* describes the formation of a [coating for fragile foods](#) from fibroin, the protein found in silk.

Food for Fines: Offenders could soon be [paying their parking tickets with canned food](#) in Tampa, Florida.

Color Me Tasty: Studies show that color not only plays an [important role in how we taste](#), but it can suggest flavors to our brains that are not necessarily there.



Thought for Food: I think this ice cream sundae with whipped cream and syrup must be healthy.



Plant Agriculture and Environmental News

A Living, Life-giving Natural Resource (videos): These informative USDA [articles and videos look at soil](#). There are more microbes in a teaspoon of healthy soil than there are people on the Earth.

Drought and Smart Practices (video): A California ranch in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley is facing a serious drought--and [implementing projects that embrace sustainability](#). This clip is part of a USFRA/Food52 series.

Soybean Markets: World and U.S. [soybean supplies will be tighter than expected](#) for the next two years because of reduced harvests in South America and rising global demand, the U.S. Agriculture Department said.

Organic Cost Break: Hawaii became the first state to pass legislation providing [tax breaks for farmers to offset the cost](#) of getting certified as organic by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Sweet Crop: U.S. sugar beet farmers are expected to [reap a record harvest next year](#), undeterred by a trend among some food manufacturers to favor their competitor, cane sugar that is not genetically modified.

Bittersweet Crop? (related to above): Some [sugar beet growers are concerned](#) about the move away from biotech crops.

Digital Weeds: Weed scientists at The Ohio State University developed [several digital weed identification and management guides](#) for growers and now offer them on both Android and Apple operating platforms.



It's Alive! The importance of good soil management.

Plants, by the Numbers: As part of a new report carried out by the Royal Botanic Gardens, scientists have estimated that there are [390,900 plants known to science](#).

Plant Tug of War: Two Texas A&M AgriLife scientists are studying the virtual tug-of-war that takes place [when a pathogen attacks a plant](#).



International News

A Drone, a Shark, and a Pod of Whales (video): A guy messing around with his camera drone near Sydney, Australia, captured a rare sight--a [group of whales hunting a shark](#).

Coffee Is Life (photo essay): Follow the coffee bean and meet members of a rural Ethiopian community who [depend totally on this crop](#).

Adios, El Niño: The warm El Niño is [fading even more quickly](#) than experts thought it would. Scientists are expecting its "evil" twin sister--the cold, dry La Niña--to arrive even earlier.

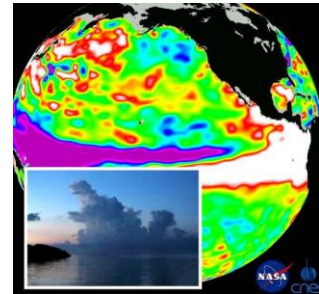
Biotech Confusion: As the EU debates whether or not gene-edited crops are GMOs, the [confusion affects scientists and companies](#) who want to grow crops in field trials or license their work in Europe.

Literal Food Bank: The Roti Bank in India allows people with extra food to deposit it at the "bank," and others who are [hungry or poor can withdraw it](#).

Electronic Nose Sniffs for Freshness: Scientists from the University of Leicester have identified a way to [sniff the ripeness of mangoes](#).

Brazilian Soy Moratorium: The Brazilian soy moratorium has prohibited participants from [trading, acquiring, or financing soybeans](#) from areas of the Brazilian Amazon biome that were deforested after July 2008.

Serving 1.3 Billion: China's [appetite for meat has made billionaires](#) out of two of the country's largest animal-feed providers.



There's no controlling the weather gods.



General Interest News

Advice for Beginning Farmers (videos): This USDA website navigates the [Small Farm Funding Resources](#)--guides to consider before starting a farming operation, including information regarding grants and loans.

Biotech Mosquitoes and Zika: A U.S. senator from Florida says he supports the [use of genetically modified mosquitoes](#) in the Lower Keys to help stop the spread of the Zika virus.

Know Your Soil: The [University of Arkansas soil judging team](#) produced successful results at the 2016 National Collegiate Soil Judging Contest.

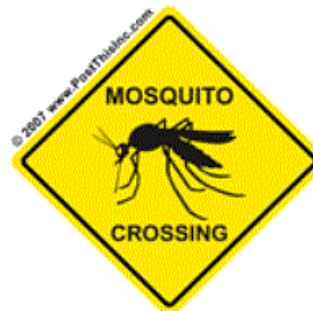
Green Award: An international initiative [awarded the University of Nebraska a silver rating](#), as the school completed an assessment of sustainability-related practices and programs.

Uprooted Record: The number of people throughout the world who were uprooted from their homes [because of conflicts and natural disasters](#) stood at a record 40.8 million last year, the highest figure ever recorded.

The Drought Persists: California's Governor Jerry Brown made some of the state's temporary [water restrictions permanent](#).

U.S. Opioid Epidemic: As of 2011, 75% of the world's opioid [prescription drugs were prescribed and used](#) in a country that makes up less than 5% of the world's population.

Plastic Bag Ban: Under a Massachusetts law, shoppers would be able to buy craft beers and spirits at farmers' markets--but [not take purchases home in a plastic bag](#).



CAST Information

Check out CAST's page at the [YouTube site](#) to view highly regarded ag-science videos about probiotics, food safety, and water issues--or the latest video dealing with proposed mandatory labeling of GMO food items.



If you have a good idea for a CAST publication, contact us by [clicking HERE for the "Proposal Format](#) and Background Information Form."

CAST provides Friday Notes as a benefit to its members. Please do not forward, edit, copy, or distribute the Notes in any form to nonmembers without the express permission of the CAST Executive Vice President Kent Schescke (kschescke@cast-science.org). Instead, please encourage your colleagues to join CAST and thereby become eligible for all membership benefits.

Contact Colleen Hamilton at 515-292-2125, ext. 224 or chamilton@cast-science.org, or [CLICK HERE](#) for CAST membership information.

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- * American Society of Plant Biologists
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- * Aquatic Plant Management Society
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- * Weed Science Society of America
- * Western Society of Weed Science
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CAST assembles, interprets, and communicates credible, science-based information regionally, nationally, and internationally to legislators, regulators, policymakers, the media, the private sector, and the public.

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- * Cal Poly
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- * University of Kentucky
- * University of Nebraska Agricultural Research Division
- * University of Nevada



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